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THE

.....
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THE
Christian's Triumph:

A
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED

TO THE

Congregation assembled

IN

PAUL'S CHURCH,
TAUNTON;

AT THE INTERMENT
Of the Rev^d Mr. *William Johnson*,

ON : DECEMBER 4th, 1768.

By *JOHN PEACOCK.*

Published by Request.

TAUNTON:

Printed and Sold by WILLIAM NORRIS.

THE

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED



PAULINE CHURCH

AT THE INTERMENT

OF THE ROYAL MARSHAL

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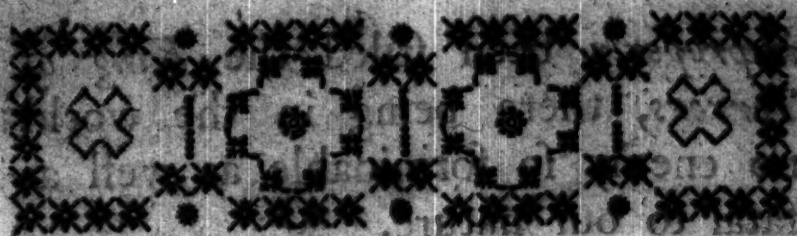
OF THE ROYAL MARSHAL

JOHN PEARSON

Published by R. B. R.

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T H E

INTRODUCTION.



DEATH, whether we consider it in *itself* as the grand destroyer of the human race, at whose awful shrine a thousand victims are daily offered; or as attended with a long *train* of maladies, sicknesses, and pains, hath not

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improperly

improperly been stiled the *King of Terrors*, there being in the world no enemy so formidable as well as fatal to our nature.

EVERY appearance that the *monster* assumes is ghastly and affrighting, and needs only be *beheld* to raise in our breasts the utmost horror.

Observe, where the invenomed shafts of Death have once entered, how quickly the fatal *disease* runs through every part of our constitution! how soon it *unnerves* and *enfeebles* the most *robust* texture of body! that the *highest* degree of human strength, when belaboured by Death's more powerful arm, proves weak and impotent, unable to sustain *itself*, or oppose the rapid progress of the last enemy; who quickly rends the cords of *life* asunder, as easily

easily as *Sampson* once did the *restraints* wherewith he was bound by the *Philistines*.

WHETHER *He* assaults our bodies by slow and lingring *consumptions*, wasting and undermining *them* as it were by small and imperceptible degrees, or whether his attacks are made on us with more violence by a quick-destroying *fever*, still the *arrows* of Death (all of which are innumerable) are no less sure and fatal in the end.

AND so *unlimited* are the attacks of this universal destroyer, his unrelenting hand spares neither *age*, nor *sex*, nor *wit*, nor *youth*, nor *beauty*; all alike fall victims to this mighty *King of Terrors*, not one (prepared or unprepared) exempt.

How infinitely desirable then
B 2 would

would a compleat victory be over this grand adversary to mankind. All the triumphs of *Cæsar* or of *Alexander*, of the mightiest conquerors of the world, are trifling compared herewith; since these mighty conquerors themselves have at last been vanquished by the powerful all-destroying arm of *Death*.

AND this is one circumstance among many others, which mightily recommends and endears the gospel of *Christ* to us, as worthy of all acceptance, since it shews us how the last enemy *Death* itself is to be vanquished; such a conquest *St. Paul*, the great champion of our holy religion, and one of the noble army of martyrs, had obtained: Hear in what terms of triumph and exultation he speaks,

The Christian's Triumph. 7

I CORINTHIANS, 15th Chapter,
55, 56, and 57th Verses.

*O Death, where is thy sting? O
Grave, where is thy victory? The
sting of Death is Sin; and the
strength of Sin is the Law. But
thanks be to God, which giveth us
the victory, through our Lord Je-
sus Christ.*

ON these words of the Apostle
I shall (at this solemn occa-
sion) ground my present discourse,
describing to you, as well as I can,
a believer's victory over Sin and
Death; for the Apostle mentions
both these, and then thanks God
for his victory over them; and be-
cause every christian as well as him-
self is a sharer in this victory, St.
Paul speaks in the plural number,
*thanks be to God, which giveth us
the victory, &c.*

Now

8 The Christian's Triumph.

Now men are then said with propriety to be victorious over an enemy, when that enemy of theirs is so far disabled and overcome as to be rendered forever incapable of hurting or destroying them. If this be not a victory, and the greatest of victories, I know not what can deserve that name. Yet this I will shew you, that every christian is master of, with respect to his most dreadful enemies *Sin* and *Death*.

AND this naturally leads us to consider wherein their power to destroy consists, for that we had need understand e'er we can have a proper idea of the believer's victory over them. This likewise the Apostle takes care to inform us of; for he tells us, *the sting of Death is Sin, and the strength of Sin is the Law.*

The sting of Death is Sin.

THIS

THIS is plainly a metaphorical term, but which however doth most happily express wherein lies Death's fatal power over us. For the *sting* of any animal is that weapon wherewith it is armed to annoy its adversary. Sin therefore is with the utmost propriety termed by the Apostle *the sting of Death*, because it is the root from whence the *destroying* power of Death is derived: Sin entered into the world, and Death by Sin, as the natural *issue* of it; but for Sin Death had never been *known* or *felt* by us. Yet this is not all; for Hell as well as Death is the demerit of Sin; and it is the apprehension of *this*, arising from a sense of *guilt*, that gives Death its most formidable appearance, and arms it with all its terror. *The sting of Death is Sin.*

HAVING shewn us what the
sting

sting of Death is, our Apostle proceeds to acquaint us wherein lies his *strength* and his *power* to destroy. *The strength of Sin is the Law.* Sin, as I just now observed to you, derives its destroying power therefrom, because it is by the law of God condemned, and when that is committed which is condemned and forbidden by the Law, it necessarily entails the penalty of that law upon the transgressor; thus a malefactor is said to have committed a *capital* offence, by being guilty of that crime to which the law has annexed the penalty of death; which is most plainly the case here. Death was the penalty of the divine law of which Sin is a transgression, as it is expressly defined by St. *John*; * and therefore it may truly be said, *the strength of Sin is the Law.* The *strength* of Sin is its power to condemn

* 1. John, II. 4.

condemn, which power, as a guard and sanction to secure obedience, the law has furnished it with.

HAVING thus explained the nature and strength of the Christian's most formidable enemies SIN and DEATH,

I now proceed to discourse to you concerning his victory over them; which I will shew you in the end; to be as perfect and compleat every way, as the Christian himself would wish or desire it to be.

Now as one chief branch of Sin's power lay in exposing us to death and condemnation, the Christian's victory properly consists in *disarming* Sin of that power; which happens whenever the pardon of it is obtained, and the guilt removed. Its condemning power is then no more. For this

this (as I shall prove under our next head of discourse) it is already deprived of by the death of *Christ*. It has been said that the *bee* leaves its *sting* behind in the wounded person. *Certain* however it is that when *Christ* endured our *sins* in his own body upon the tree, the guilt of them, that is the *sting*, was taken away. *He bath* made him to be *Sin* for us, who knew no *sin*; that we might be made the righteousness of *God* in him. † When our blessed Saviour submitted to *Death*, that was the desert of *Sin*, the penalty of the *law* was then inflicted, and both *Sin* and the *Law* deprived of their condemning power. *Who is he that condemneth?* It is *Christ* that died. § His dying hath purchased for us a complete conquest over both *Sin* and *Death*; the former being expiated, and

† See 2 Cor. v. 21. § Romans, viii. 34.

and the *latter* consequently van-
quished, by *Christ*.

Our victory over Death, the last
enemy, (which I now go on to de-
scribe) lies in disarming it of that
fatal unlimited power over our na-
ture, which by Sin it had obtained.
The scripture plainly makes a dis-
tinction between the *first* and the
second Death. The *former* is only
temporary, enduring but a little
while, (as our life now does;) but
the *second* is eternal. The *first* of
these is all which the believer in
Christ shall ever know by experi-
ence: It is expressly promised to all
such, that *over them the second death*
shall have no power. † And with re-
gard to *temporal* Death, to which *they*
as well as other men submit; this
in the end shall terminate in the
Christian's advantage, and pave the
way

14 The Christian's Triumph.

way to a more glorious state of existence than on *earth* he ever knew. For no sooner is the soul of a believer absent from the body, but it is present with the LORD; conveyed by angels into *Abraham's bosom*. While the disanimated *clay* is laid in the dust, and rests in hope of a glorious resurrection; his soul the mean while has a *dwelling* with God, *an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* * This corruptible body shall indeed be dissolved and mix with its original *dust*, be so blended and incorporated therewith, that even the *constituent* parts themselves shall to the *human* eye be utterly imperceptible and unknown, undistinguished from common mould; But to the eye of *omniscience* all the particles of our frame thus *dissolved* appear distinct, what transformations
soever

* 2. Cor. v. et sequent.

soever in the grave they may undergo.

Flesh and blood, says the Apostle, (in his admirable discourse upon this subject,) *cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I shew you a mystery; we shall all be changed. † And a change infinitely to the better it will be; when a once mortal and corruptible body shall cast off every rag of mortality which once on earth it wore, and shall immediately put on immortality and be arrayed in glory; those gross humours and senses now belonging to our bodies, which are adapted to the sickly and dull region they here inhabit, at the resurrection will be purged all away, and furnished instead thereof with powers and faculties suitable to its*

26 The Christian's Triumph.

immortal frame, and to that heavenly state, which both soul and body are then to possess forever. These are some of the rich advantages which the believer shall reap from the death and dissolution of the body; which is necessary that so glorious a fabric from its ruins may be rebuilt; then that which was sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory.

Thus have I described to you as briefly as this subject would admit, a believer's victory over both Sin and Death. But it is time that we hasten to the next and

Last head of this discourse; which is, to consider God as the bestower of all this blessedness, through our Lord Jesus Christ; for to him are we taught to ascribe all the glory, saying in the words of the Apostle, *Thanks be to God* which

which giveth us the victory through
our Lord Jesus Christ; the wages
and desert of Sin is Death, but the
gift of God is eternal life through
Christ Jesus.

Death is, as hath been already
observed, the penalty of a broken
law; and this both of soul and body
would (we have the highest reason
to think) have been eternal, and that
in the most awful and terrible sense,
had not God in the fulness of his
love and grace sent his own son to
purchase redemption and salvation
for us. And what the law in itself
could not do, God himself has done
for us, by sending his only begotten
son to endure the penalty of Death
in our stead. And if while we were
enemies (this is St. Paul's argument)
we were reconciled to God by the
death of his son, much more being
reconciled we shall be saved by his
life.

18 The Christian's Triumph.

life. § For if by one man's offence Death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. † Thus, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

— For as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. || — Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST in his unspeakable compassion for us laid down his life a ransom for ours; and thus He destroyed *Death* and Him that had the power of death that is the Devil, and deliver'd them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage. — Christ has disarmed that king of terrors of his fatal power over his saints. He has

§ Romans v. 10. † verse 17. | 1. Cor. xv.

has stript him of all his ghastly array, and taught our lips to sing with the triumphant Apostle, *O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Thus may the true followers of Christ exult and triumph over *Death* as an impotent, disarmed enemy; and over the *Grave*, the prison doors of which are broken down by *Christ*, the captain of our salvation; who burst their bars in funder, (for it was not possible *he could be holden of them*;) then like a glorious conqueror arose, leading *captivity itself captive*. He arose as the *first fruits* and *fore-runner* of all his saints.*

— What? tho' we now find and feel sicknesses and disorders invading this corruptible frame, this house of clay, where the immortal spirit

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for

for a while inhabits, like a pilgrim and stranger from his *native* home.

—— What? tho' we meet with various symptoms to remind us of the *soul's* departure and the body's dissolution; shall we (on these accounts) call in question the victory *Christ* has obtained over *Death*? Nay it was by *this* very means, even by dying, that *Christ himself* obtained it, and won so compleat a conquest over the *last enemy*; and we are to follow herein the captain of our salvation, shewing to all those who stand around † *how a Christian can die*, and yet in death be even more than a conqueror.

We are to make it manifest to the world, that our faith in *Christ's death and resurrection* is sufficient to support and comfort us, when all the powers of our animal nature are ready

† See a Letter on Original Composition, suggested by the late Dr. Young.

ready to sink under us. We are to enter Death's territories not as prisoners or captives, but as conquerors, yea more than conquerors, through Him that loved us; just like victors passing through an enemy's country, displaying the triumphs of their leader.

THE Christian who can face Death, with such a divine confidence of soul, *unappall'd, undismayed*; how does that man glorify Christ! and make the triumphs of his Saviour over Death and the Grave almost double!

THE doubting, trembling Christian indeed may through the iron gates of Death safely arrive to glory; but then his doubts and fears, his timorousness and anxiety of mind, do no great honour to his captain and leader; for it looks as if his faith in Christ's conquest over Death was exceeding weak and

22 The Christian's Triumph.

falling, when to *him* it appears
scarce sufficient to secure his *own*;
notwithstanding his triumphs over
it have secured the victory of ten
thousand souls, weak and defence-
less as *himself*, who have overcome
this *last enemy* by the blood of the
Lamb.

BUT that believer, who (as St.
Paul speaks,) *has fought the good*
fight, under Christ's victorious ban-
ner, and *finished his course*, and his
warfare on earth, having *kept the*
faith; — at length encounters
Death, with an holy fortitude and
courage, as the *first* followers of
the Redeemer did; he shall have
a safe and triumphant passage
through Death's dark territories,
and an abundant entrance shall be
administred to him, into the ever-
lasting kingdom of our Lord and
Saviour Jesus Christ; applauding
angels waiting around, to congratu-
tulate

tulate his dismissal from a world of *Sin* and *Death*, and his entrance on a world of *blessedness* and *immortality*, where *Sin* and *Death* are known no more.

BUT now take a view (I pray you) of the *different* state and condition of the impenitent sinner at death. — Behold Him just standing on the brink of eternity, yet afraid to enter that awful state: his soul trembles to appear *naked* and *disembodied* (as it must) before God, against whom, perhaps, he has spent an whole life of sin and rebellion; and died too (may be) in an harden'd impenitent state, — without *Christ*, — overwhelm'd with the guilt of his iniquities, having never by faith washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the *Lamb*.

How must the thoughts of God's
strict

24 The Christian's Triumph.

strict holiness, of his inflexible justice, affright and even distract the sinner in his departing moments! if he has any sense of his sad and guilty condition, how must it blacken the gloom of death! increase the agonies of dissolution, and fill his mind with that anguish and despair, arising from unpardon'd guilt, which is the very sting of death, and the chief misery of hell! the torments of which our Saviour has describ'd by the worm that dieth not, and a fire which shall not be quenched: and in another place He tells us, these shall go away into everlasting punishment, &c. Now to be eternally banish'd from God; which is one great part of the sinner's misery; not to have the least glimmering hope of ever regaining his favour; to feel the terrible impressions of his wrath always lying upon the conscience; — to be surrounded

rounded on all sides with tormenting objects; exposed continually to the insults of wicked spirits, who here were their tempters, but in hell will be their tormentors; — how dreadful must the thought of an eternity spent in such misery be? Yet I appeal to your own secret convictions, as well as to the express declarations of God's word, whether it be any more than the wicked and the ungodly in the other world are certainly liable to; and what can the mind of man conceive more intolerable than this? Well therefore might the Apostle say, *The sting of Death is Sin*. For this is the procuring cause of all that misery, to which Death is the fore-runner.

For any therefore still to proceed in their sins and impenitency, is only to treasure up to themselves wrath, and laying in fuel

fuel for everlasting burnings; 'tis building a foundation for unknown *anguish* and *despair*; and planting before hand their dying pillow with *thorns*.

BUT to *believe* in Christ as our only Saviour, and resign ourselves up to him as our sovereign Lord and King; this is — I will not say to blunt the arrows of Death; — but it is to *disarm* him *intirely*; — this shall give us an interest in Christ's victories over Death; — this shall insure our *resurrection* after a short sleep in the Grave, to a life of compleat *blessedness* and *immortality*: In the faith and expectation of which, our dear deceased *Brother in the Lord* both *lived* and *died*. And accordingly in the preamble of his last will, he expressed himself in these remarkable words. First, “*I humbly recommend my*
“*immortal*”

“immortal soul into the hands of
 “the ever-blessed God; that it may
 “be prepared for, and when som-
 “mon’d hence, be admitted into glo-
 “ry; which, tho’ exceedingly unworthy
 “of, I humbly hope to obtain, from the
 “rich and abounding grace of God,
 “through the alone righteousness,
 “merits, and intercession of Jesus
 “Christ, my Lord and Saviour.”

It might perhaps be expected:
 that I should now recapitulate some
 parts of the character of that ex-
 cellent man, whose loss with so
 much reason we deplore; but this
 to You who have sat so long with
 delight and satisfaction under his
 ministry, hearing him unfold the
 oracles of God, with so much per-
 spicuity and clearness, with such a
 sacred power and energy, and with
 a torrent of holy eloquence pecu-
 liar to himself; to You, I say, all
 encomiums would be but a dull
 repetition

repetition of what you have been ear-witnesses of; having for *five* whole years enjoyed *his* ministrations among you, who was confessed to be one of the most excellent and delightful preachers the west of *England* could boast of.

You well know, for you have heard from his own lips, how plainly and strenuously he asserted and maintained those which he justly regarded as the peculiar doctrines of *Christianity*; yet without confining himself to party-phrases and expression, *which* tho' pleaded for by some, are no where authorised by the Gospel: And *this* he always look'd upon as the unerring *standard*, by which all doctrines and principles that are proposed to us must be tried. And yet with all his zeal and fervency in espousing these doctrines, he had a remarkable tenderness

derness and charity for those his brethren in the ministry that were otherwise minded; in trust that God of his grace might some time or other reveal even these unto them.

His character as a man of learning was so establish'd and indisputable, that all attempts to evince it were as needless, as it would be to endeavour to prove by demonstration, that the sun shines in the firmament, when we behold his radiant brightness, and feel the enlivening influences thereof. 'Twas impossible any one who had been at all intimately acquainted with him, could be a stranger to this part of his character. — Witness likewise the number of young gentlemen, that under his institution, became masters of the learned languages.

His intellectual faculties, where-

with God had been pleas'd to endue him, were great and uncommon. He had a lively imagination; a refined taste and fancy; a judgment matur'd and improv'd by a long and free acquaintance with the world, and strict observation of *man-kind*; a fund of wit, that flowed naturally and freely, as water from a fountain, and which rendered his conversation enlivening and agreeable. He possessed beside such a command of thought and elocution, as seldom fail'd him even upon the most sudden emergencies; nor was he at a loss how to adapt himself upon every occasion.

It is indeed to be regretted that one so well furnished for improving and edifying conversation as he was, found in his *last* illness so little opportunity of employing those excellent talents for the

the benefit and advantage of his surviving friends, who are wont to treasure up like fragments of gold the dying sentences of those departed. A few of these he left, which are faithfully deposited in the memories, and I doubt not in the hearts, of his dear relatives. That there were no more, we must ascribe to the *rapidity* of his disorder, which perhaps weakened and impaired the powers of his mind, and hindered the free and vigorous exertion of them; so that little more than broken sentences could be utter'd.

To one of his friends, who wept to see him in so low and languishing a condition, he spake thus: "I desire to live no longer than I can live to the glory of God." Being asked, whether he felt any severe pain? He replied, "he had some pains across his breast."

32 The Christian's Triumph.

breast. But, says he, if my pains
 "were much sharper than they are,
 "what were they to those that
 "Christ endured for us."

SOME few hours before his de-
 parture, he said, "I desire to be
 "resigned entirely to God's will;
 "and whether living or dying to
 "be the Lord's."

WHEN one said unto him,
 "Now, Sir, I suppose Christ is
 "precious:" He replied, "Aye,
 "Christ is always precious;" and
 soon after was heard to utter these
 words; which I think were his
 last: "The consolations of God are
 "neither few nor small." So that
 when nature was tending fast to
 its dissolution, when flesh and heart
 were ready to fail, yet then, it
 seems, he found God, whom he
 had served, to be the strength of
 his heart, as we doubt not that he
 now is his immortal portion.

"There

"There is nothing, (added he,) belonging to this world, that is worth living for;" and then spake with great joy and satisfaction of the blessedness of the heavenly state, where all his utmost wishes are now exceeded; and his hopes crowned with everlasting enjoyment.

To conclude, let all who are partakers in Christ's victory over Death, not forget with the Apostle to return their highest ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh! what immortal praises and hallelujahs do we owe to God for this his unspeakable gift. Had crowns and kingdoms been laid at our feet; had the mightiest empires of this world been made subject to us; the privilege and dignity were not half so important as this conquest over Death and the

34 The Christian's Triumph

the *Grave*, given us by God, through our Lord *Jesus Christ*. 'Tis recorded of *Alexander* the great, who had conquered all the known world, that, at the conclusion of his victories, he sat down and wept, that his *triumphs* were at an end, and that there remained no more worlds for him to *conquer*. Such is the end of all *earthly* power and greatness! tho' he had compassed every thing that the most unbounded ambition could desire or crave, and made himself master of all the wealth and power of the world, still his *happiness* was incomplete; for the mind of man, if it be suffer'd to exert itself, is apt to look forward to the *end* of all these things; and if it has *no* prospect further than what this world can present it with, *no wonder* 'tis dejected and disconsolate. But the true *Christian's* happiness, instead

instead of being *terminated* by this life, doth then most properly *begin*, when his life on earth is at an *end*: for that alone which can render *Eternity* awful or terrible is remov'd, and every thing to render the *forethought* of it pleasing and delightful the *believer* enjoys; the *sling* of death which is sin is taken away: the *law* from whence it derives its condemning power is (as you have heard) *fulfill'd* by *Christ*; the divine justice itself is appeased and *satisfy'd*; God is reconciled, and heaven open'd for every *follower of the Lamb*. Thanks be to God, therefore, (let us all say) *which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

WHAT a glorious theme for *praise* and *thanksgiving* is this! a theme never to be exhausted; affording matter of delightful entertainment to immortal ages; nay *eternity* itself

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will

36 *The Christian's Triumph.*

will be too short to utter all the praises and hallelujahs, which our redemption from *Death* and *Hell* by *Christ's* blood calls for; since we shall to eternity reap the blessed fruits of it.

ON this delightful subject the angels employ their harmonious voices, and tune their golden harps, to celebrate in the *highest* strains; — those harps which never sound more sweetly, than when the Saviour's *dying love* is the burden of their song. And shall not we, for whom he laid down his life, — for whom he shed his most precious blood, think him *worthy* to be extolled in the most exalted strains, that *earth* or *heaven* can raise?

WHAT? have we hopes of being redeem'd not only from an *abyss* of sin and misery; but raised *likewise* hereafter to the highest pitch of blessedness; — and shall we not admire

admire and adore his *love*, which laid the foundation of these hopes, by giving his son to die for us, and to *wash us from our sins in his own blood?*

WHATEVER in our *praises* and *thanksgivings* we overlook, let us be sure not to be unmindful of *Christ's* *redeeming* grace and love, who by offering up himself upon the *cross*, hath abolish'd Death, and him that had the power of Death, that is the Devil; nor let us forget that infinite love of the Father, which gave *Christ* to die for us; but learn to say and sing with the Apostle,
O Death, where is now thy sting.
O Grave, where is now thy victory.
Thanks, immortal thanks, to God,
which giveth us the victory, through
our Lord Jesus Christ.

F I N I S.

